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NEW PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT.

BY JUSTIN M'CARTHY, M. P.

WHEN I first became acquainted with the House of Commons—more than twenty years before I became a member of that assembly—the conditions of its political life were much more simple than they are at present. There were the two great opposing parties—the Liberals and the Tories. But the Liberals were beginning to be more and more subdivided into Radicals and Whigs. The Whigs were the men who followed Lord Palmerston; the Radicals were those who acted habitually with Cobden and Bright. In every great debate we heard Lord Palmerston, and Lord John Russell and Mr. Gladstone on the one side; Mr. Disraeli and the first Lord Lytton or the late Lord Derby on the other; and then Cobden and Bright as representing the more advanced Radicals. There was also an Irish party, but it was not a party which made any great mark on the actual life of the House of Commons. The time of O'Connell had passed away: the time of Parnell had not come. There were then, roughly speaking, only two great parties in the House—or at all events in the division lobbies of the House; for although Bright and Cobden both disliked and distrusted Lord Palmerston, they were generally compelled to support him in preference to supporting his Tory opponents. They supported him often, too, because of their growing belief in Mr. Gladstone.

Now how many parties are there in the House of Commons? The Liberals and the Tories are still facing each other as before. But there is an Irish party, a Scotch party, a Welsh party and a Labor party. There is a Woman's Suffrage party; there is a Temperance party; there is a Colonial party; there are other parties more or less conspicuous. These are all solid and self-centred bands, whose partisan allegiance is not always to be counted on with certainty by either of the two great parties in the state. About the Irish party I need not say much. It has made itself too well known to

need an elaborate description of its purpose and its organization. The readers of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* know very well that it is devoted to its own principles, and that it would accept Home Rule from either Liberal or Tory. The Scottish party is not as yet so compact and so resolute in its organization ; but its time will come. Its ultimate object is Home Rule for Scotland. The immediate object of the Welsh party is the disestablishment of the State Church in Wales—later on, no doubt, it will ask for Home Rule for Wales. Nothing could be more remarkable and more interesting than the growth of these two national parties in the House of Commons. They have both been inspired directly by the success of the Irish National movement. When I was first observing the House of Commons no one ever heard of a Scottish party or a Welsh party. More than that, when, fifteen years ago, I first entered the House, no Scottish or Welsh party had yet been heard of. One of the younger and more energetic leaders of the Welsh party used to be called the Parnell of Wales. The term was significant. The Scottish band and the Welsh party do not as yet try to exert much force as cross-currents in the politics of England.

The Temperance party—the party in favor of prohibitory legislation as regards the sale of intoxicating liquors—has grown to an immense power in the state. Thus far its members have habitually acted with the Liberals, because they believe there is better hope for their cause from the Liberals than from the Tories. But they would at any moment forsake the Liberals and stand by the Tories if the Tories were to promise them a full measure of local option and the Liberals were to refuse it. They would be justified in such action by the very conditions of their existence. They are, like the Irish Nationalists, a party formed for one distinct purpose, to the promotion of which all other considerations are secondary. A few years ago they were, like the old-fashioned Home Rulers, a party that merely got up an annual debate and took an annual division. This, at least, they seemed to be to most members of the House of Commons. Once in each session they brought in a bill for the prevention or restriction of the sale of intoxicating liquors, and the question was discussed and a division was taken and the Prohibitionists were left in a small minority, and the House heard no more about the matter until the next session. I know men who

used to vote with the Prohibitionists because they said it looked well to be on the side of temperance and the prohibition bill could not possibly do any harm because it never could pass. In the meanwhile the temperance men were exerting themselves all over the country, in every city and in every village and at every election. The press was for the most part against them, but the pulpits were for the most part with them. They got hold of a new and a taking principle, a new and a taking name. They made their agitation one in favor of "local option." It was to be left to a certain majority in each community to say whether the sale of intoxicating drinks should or should not be permitted there. Many a man who has no particular faith in the suppression of drunkenness by legislation finds it hard to say why the majority in any community should not be allowed to determine whether they will or will not allow drinking shops to be established among them. At one time it was thought that the power of the publicans was irresistible at the elections, but of late many people have begun to doubt whether the temperance men are not the stronger influence of the two. It is certain that of recent years the official leaders of the Liberal party have determined to defy the publicans and to translate as soon as they can the principle of local option into legislation. The present government are pledged to some adaptation of the principle. At one time even a man like Mr. John Bright, an austere worshipper of temperance, a man who never had a decanter or a wineglass in his house, was unable to see his way to going all the length with the followers of Sir Wilfrid Lawson.

Sir Wilfrid Lawson is the leader and the inspiration of the Local Option party. The party is very happy in having such a man to lead it. If a writer of farce or comic novel were to set about describing the leader of such a party he would be certain to paint a picture of a man curiously unsympathetic with any form of human weakness; a man absolutely devoid of any sense of humor—a sour, or what the Scotch would call a "dour," man. Such a man would simply have wearied and disgusted the House of Commons, which dearly loves to be amused and especially detests to be sermonized or bored. Sir Wilfrid Lawson is one of the most humorous men, one of the most inveterate makers of jokes in the House of Commons. He is bubbling over with fun. He can scratch off in a moment a rattling poetic epigram or par-

ody. He puts his gravest truths in the delightful form of a jest or a story. The House cannot but hear him. Nobody wants not to hear him. All the time he is absolutely in earnest—only it is part of his nature and perhaps also part of his purpose never to be dull, never to weary the House. So he has always his audience ready to hand—his strongest opponents are only too glad to hear him. Let any one who understands what English parliamentary life is, think what it is for a party to have a leader whom everybody wants to listen to. Sir Wilfrid Lawson comes of a fine old North of England family; of what its people love to call the North Country. He is, I believe, a rich man, and I have heard that he spends every year large sums of money in the promotion of his cause. He has wrought so far a wonderful success. The Liberal government have had to set aside his measure for this session, because they had too many things to do which could not be put off. But a man has almost carried his point when he has prevailed upon a Liberal government to adopt his principle and pledge themselves to carry it into legislation. I am not myself greatly enamoured of the principle. I am not very confident of its ultimate effect. I have made careful studies, at different times, in the United States and in Canada—studies extending over nearly five and twenty years—which have not gone far to encourage my faith in any form of prohibitory legislation. But I am not blind to actual facts in social movements and in Parliament. I see that the experiment of local option has to be tried in England. I see that it has become a question which is capable of making and unmaking ministries; and I see, too, that it is a principle which has grown to an immense popularity in the country. I must say that the success of the movement thus far is due in great measure to the leadership of Sir Wilfrid Lawson.

I have no occasion to say much about the Woman Suffrage movement. It has been going on for some years. It has not lately made any conspicuous advance in the House of Commons. This is partly due to the fact that the organizers of the movement have been very patient and have not been willing to thrust themselves into the forefront of parliamentary agitation. I have, for the sake of one political cause at least, good reason to feel grateful to them for not having tried to obstruct and interfere with the action of the Liberal government. Their self-restraint

ought to be taken into consideration, and with grateful recognition of their forbearance, at some early period. If it is not, they will have every justification for assuming an independent and a resolute ground of their own. The House of Commons is, unfortunately, too often like the crowd at the gallery door of a theatre when a popular piece is on. If you do not crush forward you are certain to be left behind.

The representation of Labor in Parliament is, of course, not a new thing. It dates from the year 1874. At the general elections of that year the Liberals, headed by Mr. Gladstone, went out of office, and the Tories, led by Mr. Disraeli, came into power. The Tories were full of gladness and even of exultation. If only they could have foreseen! That election brought in the first Labor candidates—avowedly Labor candidates—who ever sat in the House of Commons and were enabled by their class to maintain such a position. That election, too, brought back Mr. Isaac Butt to the House of Commons after a long absence, and brought with him, too, the first utterance of the name of Home Rule. The two Labor candidates returned to that Parliament were Mr. MacDonald, a man long since dead, and my friend Mr. Burt, who is still in the House and who is now and was once before a member of a Liberal administration. No man in the House of Commons, I will answer for it, is more respected there than Mr. Burt. Mr. Burt was a workingman in the mines. He managed to educate himself somehow, and is now much better educated, taking him all round, than many a man who has gone through a full course of University training. In 1874 Mr. Disraeli offered his congratulations to the House of Commons on the fact that they had at last two representatives of labor in their midst. I do not think the congratulation was insincere. Disraeli had a sort of sentimental sympathy with the workingman. He tried at one time to call into existence a multitudinized Conservative workingman. Mr. Bright, Radical as he was, did not seem to be inclined to the introduction of the Labor candidate—as a Labor candidate. He was opposed on principle, he said, to the idea of representation by class interests. He was opposed to the representation in Parliament of the railway interests, the landlord interests, the brewers' interests—and so he was doubtful about the labor interests. The answer of the Labor candidates would have been only too obvious.

The House of Commons had got the representation of the railway interests, the landlord interests, the brewers' interests, the army interests, the navy interests, and many other interests besides, and could not possibly get rid of them—and what conceivable reason could there be for refusing to organized labor some representation of its interests? The case was clear, and the Labor candidates became more and more successful—and even the rural laborer soon found his representation. Men like Mr. Cremer, Mr. Howell, Mr. James Rowlands, and many others came in to swell the representative influence of the artisan in cities, in mines, and in dockyards, and Mr. Joseph Arch was sent into the House to speak up for the cause of the rural laborer. The Irish National party, the Scotch National party, the Welsh National party have now each and all their own Labor representatives in the House of Commons. Clearly the principle of Labor representation has "caught on"—has indeed prevailed against all adversaries, all odds, and all objections.

The most conspicuous man among the newer members of the Labor party is undoubtedly Mr. John Burns. I have great admiration and respect for Mr. John Burns, and a firm belief in him. He has about him the charm of a strong, self-reliant manhood—he is above all things a man. You can see this in his dark, soft, gleaming eyes. They are eyes which invite confidence. John Burns is a working engineer who has led a toiler's life, afloat and ashore and under various conditions. He has worked along those mysterious African rivers which are associated in the minds of most of us with the explorings of Stanley and of Emin Pasha. He has worked in London sheds and yards. He is a fine and a powerful speaker, and can control a vast meeting of workingmen with irresistible force. He is a great democratic influence, and political parties and social organizations can hardly reckon without him. He seldom speaks in the House of Commons, but when he does speak he speaks well and goes straight to the point. He never speaks but on some subject which he thoroughly understands, and about which he has something important and direct to say. He has a fine and even thrilling voice, and one always feels that some day when his time comes and his own question is uppermost he will make a great speech. For the present that time has not come, and John Burns has given loyal and devoted support to the

Home Rule Bill. The natural defect of many such men in the House of Commons would be to think of nothing but their own cause. One who has been long engaged out of doors in a particular cause is apt, if he gets into the House of Commons, to lose all sense of perspective and proportion. He does not see that something else has to come first. He will not see that anything else ought to come first. So he persists in merely trying to beat his own drum and to prevent others from rattling their drums at all. He becomes like a player of cards who insists on playing out of his turn. Thus he puts people against him and even perhaps against his cause. He sinks very often into a mere "crank." I have known honest and gifted and devoted men become utter failures in the House of Commons—failures for themselves and for their cause—through this fatal misconception. John Burns has none of this weakness. I do not believe he would surrender a single principle of his cause for all the governments and all the political parties in the world. But neither would he injure another great cause or show himself impatient with it or unconcerned about it because it happened to be in before him. When John Burns came into Parliament at the last general elections, he found Home Rule in possession of the field. Nothing on earth could have displaced it. Even that great disorganizer of English domestic reforms—a foreign war—a war between England and some foreign State—could not have pushed Home Rule from its place. Therefore, John Burns, being a sturdy Home Ruler already, threw his energies and his heart into the task of advancing Home Rule. He worked for it with unceasing courage and good sense, both in public and in private. He never missed a chance of speaking for his own cause; but he recognized the fact that the Home Rule cause "had the floor," and he made no effort to impede it, but, on the contrary, helped it cheerfully in every way that came within his power.

John Burns, of course, represents the artisan order. Joseph Arch represents the rural laborer. Joseph Arch was a mere farm laborer himself. He does not pretend to be anything but a farm laborer now. He is a sensible, solid man who has the historical merit of having first taught the English rural laborer to form organizations—trade organizations—as their fellows in the cities and towns had already done, and to fight the cause for themselves. Arch has told me that he had practically no education, and indeed

there was very little school education of any kind going for the rural laborer in his younger days. But he managed to learn a good deal all the same—one can learn a good deal if he has a will that way without the help of a village schoolmaster. Arch devoured books and studied mathematics of nights when his work in the fields was done. He is a man of deep-rooted, natural, serious piety, and for a long time acted in the capacity of a volunteer Methodist preacher among his people. He thus acquired a forcible and sustained style of speaking which impressed his audience when he began to deal with politics, and, which was of more importance, he had also acquired the full confidence of all who knew him. Under his impulse and his care the agricultural movement became an influence and a power, and in due course of time he was sent into Parliament to advocate its objects and its claims. He had an early sympathy with the condition of the Irish peasantry. Only the other day he was telling me how he met some of the arguments against the annual immigration of the Irish reapers and other agricultural laborers into the English counties during harvest time. Many English laborers complained bitterly of this invasion of competing labor from Ireland and its effect upon the wages of Englishmen. “Don’t blame the Irish laborers,” Arch was wont to argue; “blame the Irish landlords and agitate against them. Blame the man in the big house yonder and others like him. He is an Irish landlord and draws all his fine income from Ireland, and he hardly ever goes to Ireland, and his agent screws up the rents in Ireland so high that the farmers could not pay them and live, and the laborers could not exist at all if they did not cross over every harvest to England and Scotland and try by hard work to get a few pounds to keep their wives and their children alive during the long winter.” Arch has always been a sturdy Home Ruler and he is of course an ardent radical. He is a simple, straightforward man. He wears even now a costume very much like that of an ordinary English peasant, and has not the slightest idea of claiming to be anything above his class. If there were in England that institution which a romantic young aristocrat in one of Disraeli’s novels yearned for—an “Order of Peasants”—then assuredly such an order would be proud of my friend Joseph Arch. There is nothing sour or grim about him; not any fanaticism, except, perhaps, in his dislike for the Tories. “Nothing

good for the people ever came of *them*” he stoutly maintains. Nothing of their own inception, perhaps. That is probably what he means.

Newest of all the parties in the House of Commons is the Colonial Party. The Colonial Party is composed of members of Parliament who were born or brought up in some of the colonies, or have lived much of their lives there, or have great pecuniary or other interests in the colonies, or have travelled there and made colonial questions a study on the spot, as Sir Charles Dilke, for instance, has done. The chairman of the party is Sir John Gorst, who lived a long time in New Zealand and has the peculiar distinction of being the only member of Parliament who can speak the Maori tongue. The object of the party is naturally to look after the interests of the colonists in Parliament, where of course I need hardly say they have no direct representation; and to consider how to deal with the growth of the principle of federation, a principle which is becoming a burning question throughout England's great colonial possessions. There are some born Australians in the House of Commons. There is, for example, Mr. McArthur, one of the whips of the present government; and there is the younger Mr. Curran. There are several men who spent the best part of their lives in Australia, like Mr. Henniker Heaton, the elder Mr. Curran, and Mr. J. F. Hogan. I cannot remember at the moment whether we have any prominent Canadian, except my friend the Hon. Edward Blake, who held for many years a commanding position in the Dominion Parliament. Then we have men deeply interested in South Africa, like Sir Donald Currie and Mr. Rochfort Maguire—in short, we are very well provided with unofficial representatives of our colonial system. Nothing could be more natural than that these should desire to band together and form an organization to watch over the interests of the multifarious and far-divided colonies. So far as I can see, the official representatives of the colonies in London—the Agents-General and others—do not seem to take very kindly to this new organization. Officials of any kind or class are not, I suppose, always ready to welcome any non-official intervention or even participation in what they regard as exclusively their own concern. But the men who have formed the Colonial party are not at all likely to be put out by a little chilliness at the beginning on the part of the regular

officials. The truth is that nothing is to be done in the House of Commons now without a special party to look after its interests and to press them, and to push them, and to drive them, until at last they get a place in the front. Nothing can be done without such organizations—I should not like to say what may not be done by their aid and by their energy.

A strong organization in Parliament and outside it will now make any government do almost anything. It sometimes takes one's breath away to observe the rapidity with which conversions are made now on either side of the House. We had a remarkable instance of this lately. While the Conservatives were last in office they were pressed to pass a certain measure in favor of the interests of the Irish tenantry. The leaders of the Conservative government in both Houses delivered the most positive declarations that on no account would they consent to pass any such measure. The supporters of the measure were not daunted. They kept up their agitation—and with what result? The strong Conservative government brought in the measure and passed the measure in that same session! And what happened afterwards—the other day in fact? Lord Salisbury, the late Prime Minister, denounced the self-same measure in terms the strongest and the bitterest that even he could use. But why was this? Because the rapidity of his conversion to the principle of the measure had been so sudden that in a few months he had totally forgotten all about it. He had forgotten that he was converted, and had even forgotten that the measure he was denouncing was his own measure, and the measure of his own government! How long is it since nearly all men in authority on both sides of the House were declaring the demand for an Eight-Hour bill to be a demand not worthy of serious consideration? And now—do not most of them think it quite worthy of serious consideration? There would seem to be a regular process gone through now by the leaders of Parliament on both sides with regard to all great popular demands. The first process may be described in the words—"Your demand is absurd; we cannot even listen to it—and besides you have no backing in the country." The second is. "Come along, my fine fellows, and let us talk this over—there is very likely a good deal of sound practical sense in what you are saying—and there are such a number of you anyhow." The final utterance is: "Why, of course, we will help you to get your bill.

We were always in thorough sympathy with you—we fail to understand how any one could have thought otherwise ; and, besides, the general elections are coming on, and who can tell what the other people”—the Liberals, or the Tories, as the case may be—“might take it into their heads to do?” For I feel bound to say that the rapidity of these occasional conversions is just as remarkable on the one side of the House of Commons as on the other. Nor does all this happen by any means because either Conservative or Liberal leaders are consciously or naturally inclined to be indifferent to popular demands or to fail to render justice. But with the constant growth of new claims and new troubles in our complicated social and political existence, leaders on either side are not able to keep up with all the new questions that press upon them for attention. The House of Commons has far too much to do and its leaders cannot attend to half the work for which they are expected to arrange. Therefore the earliest chance is for the stoutest and boldest claimant. One may see at an English railway station a poor porter of whom a dozen people are making frantic inquiries all at once. He is bewildered and can answer none. Suddenly some strenuous person breaks through the crowd, seizes the porter’s arm, keeps fast hold of him, will not let him go—and gets his answer. Thus it is with English agitation and the leaders of an English Government.

JUSTIN MCCARTHY.